

LOS ANGELES (Cont.)

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Front Page Edit Page Other Page

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Sen. Fulbright Makes a Point

The hearings on the abortive Cuban invasion which a Senate committee has been conducting in closed session have yielded at least one nugget of useful public information. This was Chairman Fulbright's statement that the operation was a mistake for which there was a "collective responsibility." This announcement perhaps fails to throw much light on a shadowed subject. But it serves to dissipate some of the heat generated by over-hasty judgments.

The obvious—the human—response to an embarrassing failure like the Cuban adventure is to find a cause for blame. If the weight of responsibility can be placed on an individual or a single agency then corrective action should be taken simply and speedily. But it is clear by now that the vastness of our government's operations, the complicated interaction of bureaus and planners, almost always rules out any single focus of accountability.

The President has already assumed full responsibility for all U.S. involvement in the Cuban invasion, as indeed he must. Over-all leadership in this particular case as in all others belongs to him, and that leadership carries with it responsibility. But a leader—any leader—regardless of how talented he may be, still depends in large measure on the ability of his subordinates. And somewhere along the line it is clear the President's subordinates erred in evaluating the information on which their recommendations were based.

So the question was asked, who or

which agency was wrong? A Senate committee listened to the explanations of the top planners involved and its spokesman, Sen. Fulbright, gave his answer. But sharing the blame does not obviate the need for seeing to it that mistakes made in the Cuban situation will not be repeated. Congress, presumably, will make some recommendations to this effect, based on what its committee has learned in secret.

The most ready target for criticism in the Cuban venture is the Central Intelligence Agency. Unlike other government bureaus the CIA works under the handicap of having no press agents to advertise its finer points. When the CIA does its work well no one hears about it; indeed, intelligence and espionage almost by definition are successful only when conducted quietly. But when the CIA falls down, as in Cuba, it becomes the focal point for all blame.

To suggest what changes, if any, should be made in the CIA is clearly a job for experts, since few persons really know enough about the agency to offer valid criticism. Some of these experts have already suggested taking away from the CIA its operations functions and make it solely an intelligence gathering agency. Presumably the investigative group headed by Gen. Maxwell Taylor will consider this suggestion and others. Meanwhile, the stand taken by the Fulbright committee, that responsibility in the Cuban case is collective, will hopefully discourage further uninformed charges.